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This study describes a questionnaire survey of school librarians in North Carolina who have received advanced certification from the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards. The survey was conducted to identify the transformational leadership practices of these school librarians and assess their ability to implement professional leadership guidelines.

School librarians' leadership practices were assessed using the *Leadership Practices Inventory, 3rd Edition* (LPI). School librarians perceived themselves as possessing a high level of transformational leadership in the five exemplary practices identified by the LPI: Modeling the Way (MTW), Inspiring a Shared Vision (ISV), Challenging the Process (CTP), Enabling Others to Act (EOA) and Encouraging the Heart (ETH). They perceived themselves as being very strong at MTW and EOA. They were less successful at ISV and CTP. Overall, they were very successful in implementing professional leadership guidelines. Successful implementation of these guidelines was highly correlated with ISV and CTP.

Headings:

School librarians / North Carolina

Surveys / School librarians

Questionnaires

THE TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP PRACTICES OF NATIONAL BOARD
CERTIFIED SCHOOL LIBRARIANS IN NORTH CAROLINA

by
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Introduction

According to *Empowering Learners: Guidelines for School Library Media Programs* (American Association of School Librarians, 2009a), “The school library media program is built by professionals who model leadership and best practice for the school community” (p. 45). This leadership role is a new one for school librarians. Earlier guidelines documents (AASL, 1988; AASL, 1998) embedded leadership activities within the roles of information specialist, instructional consultant or partner, teacher, and program administrator reflecting the larger educational culture, in which school librarians were rarely regarded as leaders by their colleagues, administrators, or themselves (Hartzell, 2002; Ishizuka, Minkel, & St. Lifer, 2002; McCracken, 2001).

The purpose of *Empowering Learners* (AASL, 2009a) is to define “the future direction of school library media programs” (p. 5). Both *Empowering Learners* and its predecessors (AASL, 1988; AASL, 1998) serve as guidelines for exemplary school library media programs, providing a mission and vision for the program and identifying and describing the roles of the school library media coordinator (SLMC). The mission of the program is “to ensure that students and staff are effective users of ideas and information” (AASL, 2009a, p. 8) and to support this mission the SLMC must take on multiple roles. The original guidelines document, *Information Power: Guidelines for School Library Media Programs* (AASL, 1988) defined these roles as information specialist, teacher, and instructional consultant. The 1998 version of the guidelines (AASL, 1998) changed “instructional consultant” to “instructional partner” and added

the role of program administrator. These changes suggest an increased focus on leadership in both instructional and administrative activities. It is only with *Empowering Learners*, however, that the guidelines explicitly define “leader” as a role for the SLMC and describe exactly what a SLMC leader should look like. *Empowering Learners* (AASL, 2009a) identifies many leadership practices for school librarians. These include leading within the school and the community, adopting educational and technology trends early, participating in professional associations, publishing knowledge and best practices about libraries and learning, using research to inform practice, and pursuing continuous professional growth, among other activities.

It is not only program guidelines, however, which identify this role. School librarians who wish to achieve an advanced certification also must demonstrate leadership. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards offers an advanced teaching credential to educators who demonstrate through a voluntary assessment program that they “meet high standards based on what teachers should know and be able to do” (NBPTS, 2010c). School librarians applying for this credential must hold a valid state educator’s license, a bachelor’s degree and at least three full years of experience working as a SLMC (NBPTS, 2010a). This advanced credential is desirable not only because it often comes with increased pay and professional prestige (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2009) but also because students of National Board Certified teachers make higher gains on achievement tests than students of non-certified teachers (National Research Council of the National Academies, 2008). Like *Empowering Learners* (AASL, 2009a), the National Board’s Professional Teaching Standards library media standards (NBPTS, 2001) describe the activities of a school

library leader, identifying areas of practice such as using research to inform practice, pursuing professional growth, sharing knowledge about trends and developments in education, collaboration with other educators, participation in the wider school community, participation in professional associations, and advocacy for the school library media program.

Such expectations are present at the state level as well. The North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards Commission, for example, which creates the standards by which the performance of educators in North Carolina is evaluated, recently added leadership to its standards document (NPTSC, n. d.). These standards require teachers to lead in their classrooms, in their schools, and in their profession, while advocating for the school and maintaining high ethical standards. School librarians¹ in North Carolina are not evaluated using the same standards as classroom teachers, but the SLMC standards are currently under revision and will parallel the teaching standards closely, including a leadership component (R. White, personal communication, October 8, 2010).

Thus, school librarians must demonstrate leadership to meet the expectations of their national professional organization, to achieve advanced teaching credentials, and even, in North Carolina, to maintain their professional positions. Since the release of *Empowering Learners* (AASL, 2009a), however, no research has examined the extent to which librarians are able to carry out the leadership practices it identifies. In today's political, economic, and educational climate, it is important to know how school library leaders behave and to what extent they implement these practices, both to evaluate the standards and to provide examples for leadership development for school librarians.

¹ "School Librarian" is the official title for the profession according to the American Association of School Librarians. In North Carolina, licensure is granted under the title "School Library Media Coordinator."

Research Problem

Few researchers have studied the activities of school librarians who act as leaders. A thorough search of the literature revealed only one relevant study published since the release of *Empowering Learners* (AASL, 2009a), a doctoral dissertation examining the self-perceptions of leadership potential of graduate students in a school library media preparation program (Smith, 2009). Most literature on the subject of school library leadership is prescriptive, focusing on the abstract characteristics of a good leader (AASL, 2009a), or editorial, providing advice based on personal experience with no grounding in systematic research (Everhart, 2007; Haycock, 2010; Sindelar, 2009; Williams, 2006). School librarians need empirical evidence of replicable leadership practices in order to improve their current leadership skills and to meet the requirements of *Empowering Learners* (AASL, 2009a) and the NBPTS *Standards* (2001).

The current study addresses the following questions:

1. What are the self-perceived transformational leadership practices of school librarian leaders?
2. To what extent are librarians with high self-perceived transformational leadership able to carry out the leadership behaviors described in *Empowering Learners* (AASL, 2009a)?

Literature Review

This literature review aims to define leadership and describe its history as a field of study. It then outlines the body of research literature on this subject present in the library and information sciences. It addresses different types of leadership which may be employed in the educational environment, including transformational leadership, instructional leadership, integrated leadership, and teacher leadership. Finally, it presents the current state of the literature regarding leadership in school libraries.

Leadership

Defining leadership. Numerous studies have examined leadership as a phenomenon, but no commonly agreed-upon definition of leadership exists. The *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (O’Neil, 2008) provides an overview of leadership and synthesizes multiple definitions, identifying a common thread among all of them: leadership involves one person actively exerting influence over others as they work towards a common goal or objective. The definition which states this most succinctly while still encompassing the most important characteristics of leadership is that written by the U. S. Army in its 1999 field manual, *Army Leadership: Be, Know, Do*: “Leadership is influencing people—by providing purpose, direction, and motivation—while operating to accomplish the mission and improving the organization” (pp. 1-2). This definition is equally applicable in the field of education, where leaders must influence colleagues, students, parents, and community stakeholders as they operate to accomplish the mission of preparing students for life after graduation and improving the school itself.

Leadership theory. Leadership has been a field of study within the social sciences since the nineteenth century (O’Neil, 2008). Early studies focused on “great man” theories, which described leaders as people with certain innate traits and attributes which gave them power over others (Hollander & Offerman, 1990). Meta-analyses of these studies found that such traits included high intelligence, adjustment, extroversion, dominance, masculinity, drive, desire to lead, honesty and integrity, self-confidence, cognitive ability, and competence (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991; Lord, de Vader, & Alliger, 1986; Mann, 1959; Stodgill, 1948).

Other theories defined leadership in terms of observable behaviors (Chemers, 1997), including whether a leader focused on production factors such as planning and productivity or affective factors such as subordinates’ well-being (Katz & Kahn, 1966). Such behavioral approaches, however, produced inconsistencies in the research literature, with the relationships between leadership behaviors and leadership effectiveness varying significantly from one study to another (Bass & Stodgill, 1990; Bryman, 1992).

Contingency and situational theories of leadership responded to these inconsistencies, asserting that the circumstance in which leader-follower interaction takes place influences the leadership process (O’Neil, 2008). Elements of this circumstance include organizational tasks, relationships, and the characteristics and motivation of both the leader and the followers (Fiedler, 1967; Hersey & Blanchard, 1969; House, 1971; Vroom & Yetton, 1973). Transactional leadership theories, however, focus less on the surrounding circumstances and more on the followers’ perceptions of the leader’s behavior (Hollander & Offerman, 1990). In this type of

model, a leader earns “credits” by demonstrating commitment to the group through directing the achievement of group goals and considering followers’ input, which can then be “exchanged” for influence over followers, inducing them to participate in innovative courses of action. The goal for a leader in this model is to achieve legitimacy in the eyes of followers (Hollander, 1958).

Trait, behavioral, contingency, and transactional theories focus on leadership as it relates to efficiency and effectiveness, but often overlook the affective factors in the leader-follower relationship. New genre theories, which have dominated the leadership literature since the 1980s, focus on symbolic, visionary leadership which takes into account the emotional aspect of this relationship (O’Neil, 2008). The most frequently researched theories of these have been charismatic and transformational leadership (Judge & Piccolo, 2004), both of which are positively associated with leadership effectiveness and desirable organizational outcomes in many different settings (Avolio, Bass, Walumbwa, & Zhu, 2004).

Transformational leadership. Transformational leadership has been one of the most frequently-studied leadership models in the field of educational leadership (Stewart, 2006). According to this model, transformational leaders work to create and guide change within organizations through their own unselfish behavior (Bass & Bass, 2008; Burns, 2003; Posner & Kouzes, 1994). Members of organizations with transformational leaders are empowered, have a shared vision for the organization, and work together to achieve that vision (Posner & Kouzes, 1994). Transformational leaders motivate their followers, appealing to their inner values (Burns, 1995). As they work towards a shared goal, the followers become leaders themselves. Through their

transformation, leaders and followers become more effective members of the organization (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Burns, 1995; Kouzes & Posner, 2007).

Kouzes and Posner (2007), in particular, developed a model of transformational leadership which serves as the theoretical framework for several studies (Abu-Tineh, Khasawneh, & Al-Omari, 2008; Fields & Herold, 1997; Hautala, 2005; Posner & Kouzes, 1994; Ridgway, 2001). They analyzed interviews and case studies of individuals describing their own personal-best leadership experiences. Throughout their development of this framework, they have collected over 11,000 qualitative surveys and conducted more than 500 interviews (Kouzes & Posner, 2002). Their model consists of “The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership” (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). These practices include modeling the way, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the process, enabling others to act, and encouraging the heart. Modeling the way means demonstrating through their own behavior their expectations of others, clarifying their values, and setting an example for their followers. To inspire a shared vision, leaders must “envision exciting and ennobling possibilities” (Kouzes & Posner, 2007, p. 17). They then enlist others who share their vision. In challenging the process, leaders look for opportunities “to innovate, grow, and improve” (Kouzes & Posner, 2007, p. 18). They are willing to experiment and take risks. In order to enable others to act, leaders must first “foster collaboration and build trust” (Kouzes & Posner, 2007, p.20) and strengthen the capacities of their followers to meet their own commitments. Finally, transformational leaders encourage the hearts of their followers by recognizing their contributions and celebrating their values and successes.

Transformational leadership, especially as described by Kouzes and Posner (2007), provides a valuable theoretical framework for the current study. The focus on leadership in the context of organizational change is especially appropriate, as the professional expectations of school librarians and teachers are changing to focus more on leadership (AASL, 2009a; NCPTSC, n. d.). The American educational system has been in constant flux since the 1950s (Fullan, 2001); thus, schools are always in the midst of organizational change. Furthermore, libraries of all types face an uncertain future (American Library Association Office for Information Technology Policy, 2009), a state which requires flexibility and willingness to make changes and take risks.

Library Leadership

As Sharon Gray Weiner (2003) pointed out in her review of the literature on leadership in academic libraries, “There is a dearth of published studies or dissertations that relate leadership to effectiveness of library directors, their organizations, or outcomes” (p. 14). Weiner surveyed literature published on the topic between 1980 and 2003, including research studies, theories and models, literature reviews, books, and journal articles. Although she only found 38 studies, she was able to identify a few themes. These included recruitment, leadership potential and career development, roles and responsibilities, and characteristics and management style. In spite of these common themes, she did not discover any particular trends in the findings of these studies.

The *Journal of Library Administration* addressed leadership in both theory and practice, in Volume 32, Issue 3 & 4 (2001), but none of these articles were empirical studies on the subject. Similarly, two issues of *Library Trends* (Volume 50, Issue 4;

Volume 53, Issue 1) address leadership and organizational development but contain little empirical research.

The most extensive study undertaken in the area of library leadership is the Delphi study undertaken by Peter Hernon, Ronald R. Powell, and Arthur P. Young (2003). In their review of the literature, they found lists of competencies, characteristics, and qualities of ideal library directors, but these were not based on scholarly research. One such list included leadership abilities and attitudes (Mahmoodi & King, 1991-92). These fell under the categories of providing a vision for the future and promoting staff development. Citing their own earlier research, Hernon, Powell, and Young (2003) identified both managerial and personal qualities which contributed to leadership. Many of these echo the qualities described in *Empowering Learners* (AASL, 2009a), including advocacy and collaboration.

Hernon, Powell, and Young (2003) divided their sample into two groups: directors of academic libraries and directors of public libraries. Directors of academic libraries indicated that the qualities necessary for effective leadership varied based on contextual factors. They emphasized the importance of managerial attributes such as the ability to set a strategic agenda and collegiality and personal attributes such as integrity and interpersonal skills. Communication skills were important as both managerial and personal qualities. They identified technology, library operations, and planning and evaluation as important areas of knowledge for library directors. Public library directors also emphasized communication skills, integrity, and collegiality. To these qualities they added vision, as well as knowledge of trends and innovations, current library practices, long-term planning, financial management, and intellectual freedom. Hernon,

Powell, and Young (2003) found that academic library directors placed a higher priority on fundraising development as part of a leader's responsibilities than public library directors did. Hernon, Powell, and Young (2003) also researched the different ways library directors believed leadership competencies could be gained. These included leadership institutes, mentorships, and on-the-job experience.

School Leadership

While many of the themes and characteristics identified by Weiner (2003) and by Hernon, Powell, and Young (2003) parallel those identified in *Empowering Learners* (AASL, 2009a), the curriculum-focused purpose of the school library media program and the school librarian's roles as teacher and instructional partner place the school library leader in a position closer to that of an educational or instructional leader than a director of a public or academic library. For this reason, it is important to consider the school leadership literature as well as the literature related to library leadership.

Leithwood and Jantzi (2000) described transformational leadership within the educational context along six dimensions: "building school vision and goals; providing intellectual stimulation; offering individualized support; symbolizing professional practices and values; demonstrating high performance expectations; and developing structures to foster participation in school decisions" (p. 114). Along with transformational leadership, instructional leadership is the primary framework for leadership in the K-12 educational setting (Marks & Printy, 2003). Unlike transformational leadership, which can apply in a wide variety of settings and focuses on organizational change, instructional leadership maintains a very narrow focus on activities which support the central mission of the school: teaching and

learning. Traditionally, instructional leadership has focused on the principal as the primary point of educational expertise within the school. This has enforced a hierarchy wherein principals maintain high expectations for teachers and students while retaining most of the decision-making power within the school.

Marks and Printy (2003) proposed a new model: shared instructional leadership, or integrated leadership. Shared instructional leadership enables the principal, as a transformational leader, to foster growth in both students and teachers, while empowering teachers to share in the decisions which guide and support the instructional mission of the school. They based this model on an investigation of the types of leadership present in the 24 schools selected for the Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools' School Restructuring Study (SRS).

Marks and Printy (2003) examined the content of case studies provided by the SRS, which measured school governance but not leadership, and used the data from these studies to create measures of transformational and shared instructional leadership within the schools. They coded data from these case studies to determine each school's levels of transformational and shared instructional leadership and, using hierarchical linear modeling (HLM), examined the effect of school-level leadership on pedagogical quality and academic achievement (for operationalized definitions of these terms, see Marks & Printy, 2003, pp. 379-380).

They found that schools that lacked transformational leadership also lacked shared instructional leadership, but that transformational leadership was a necessary but not sufficient condition for shared instructional leadership. Principals had to intentionally seek and foster shared instructional leadership for it to exist in the

school. They found that, “Where integrated leadership was normative, teachers provided evidence of high-quality pedagogy and students performed at high levels on authentic measures of achievement” (p. 392).

Following up on their earlier research, Printy, Marks, and Bowers (2009) examined the seven schools in the prior study with high levels of both transformational and shared instructional leadership. They also examined one school with low levels of both of these, to provide contrast. They used descriptions of three schools in particular to illustrate the lessons they learned through this content analysis. They found evidence that two of the components of transformational leadership contributed in particular to organizational growth in the schools: intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration. Providing intellectual stimulation, principals challenged their teaching colleagues to do what was necessary “to achieve a preferred future” (p. 526). Demonstrating individualized consideration, both principals and teachers maintained respectful relationships. Principals invited teachers into leadership roles and acknowledged the worth of their ideas; teachers similarly respected their colleagues, even taking responsibility for helping colleagues develop new competencies. Throughout their interactions, principals and teachers displayed interdependencies; each of their efforts only succeeded with commitment and support from the other.

Printy, Marks, and Bowers found that shared instructional leadership required similar interdependence to that required for transformational leadership. Principals and teachers shared high expectations for student performance, participated equally in the hiring process, and distributed decision-making responsibilities among themselves. In

addition to these important interdependent relationships, Printy, Marks, and Bowers found that institutional policies and structures enabled transformational and shared instructional leadership. Printy, Marks, and Bowers identified three “predominant practices” (p. 528) present in the integrated leadership schools: “teaming structures, interdisciplinary approaches for instruction, and personalized approaches to working with students” (p. 528).

Teacher leadership. A natural part of integrated leadership is teacher leadership, which is related to, but distinct from, the type of leadership displayed by principals and other school administrators. School librarians, while they take an administrative role in the management of their program through activities such as budgeting and managing personnel, also serve multiple instructional roles (AASL, 2009a). Because of their instructional activities, it is natural that they might consider themselves teacher leaders.

York-Barr and Duke (2004) undertook an extensive review of the literature surrounding teacher leadership. As with leadership more generally, defining teacher leadership proved difficult. After examining a variety of studies, York-Barr and Duke found that most conceptions of teacher leadership shared certain qualities. A key component was that teachers used their expertise about teaching and learning to improve both the culture and instruction in schools, with the goal of enhancing student learning. Teachers were leaders among their colleagues in the area of instructional practice, but also led on the organizational level, working “to align personnel, fiscal, and material resources to improve teaching and learning” (p. 261). York-Barr and Duke also found that teacher leadership appeared to be its own unique brand of leadership, distinct

from those found in the traditional school hierarchy. In the end, York-Barr and Duke settled on the following definition of teacher leadership: "...teacher leadership is the process by which teachers, individually or collectively, influence their colleagues, principals, and other members of school communities to improve teaching and learning practices with the aim of increased student learning and achievement" (pp. 287-288).

York-Barr and Duke also looked at the actual practices of teacher leaders. The literature identified seven dimensions of practice in which teachers served as leaders: coordination and management, school or district curriculum work, professional development of colleagues, participation in school change or improvement, parent and community involvement, contributions to the profession, and preservice teacher education. They also examined the common characteristics of teacher leaders. These individuals tended to have "a strong foundation of teaching experience and expertise" (267). Their leadership appeared to be a natural outgrowth of their classroom success, founded partly on the fact that colleagues admired and respected them for their work in the classroom.

While York-Barr and Duke identified teacher leadership as distinct from traditional instructional leadership, Marks & Printy (2003) found that in schools with shared instructional leadership, teachers engaged in transformational leadership practices. Alger (2008) undertook a study to identify these transformational leadership practices of teacher leaders. Alger invited 500 randomly selected public school principals in Connecticut to recommend one teacher leader from their school for the study. He received responses from 88 teacher leaders and their principals. Using the *Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI), 3rd Edition* (Kouzes & Posner, 2003),

participants filled out a self-evaluation of their leadership practices. Principals completed an observer form. The two instruments measured Kouzes and Posner's five practices of exemplary leadership.

While both teacher leaders and principals identified "challenging the process" as a particular strength of teacher leaders, principals rated teachers much higher in this area than teacher leaders rated themselves. Algers (2008) concluded that principals need to become more familiar with the practices of teacher leaders and the barriers which prevent them from more fully practicing leadership behaviors. Algers also found a wide gap between principals' perceptions of teachers and teachers' own estimation of to what extent they "inspired a shared vision." He suggests that these teacher leaders could benefit from professional development on building support for the school vision among their colleagues. Teachers rated themselves below the national average on "encouraging the heart," suggesting that they might benefit from training in how to recognize and celebrate their colleagues' contributions and achievements. Finally, Algers found that teachers with higher educational attainment but less classroom experience self-reported more transformational behaviors than teachers with more experience and that principals agreed with this assessment.

School Library Leadership

Practitioner literature. There is a rich body of practitioner literature in the field of school library leadership. Some works feature essays drawn from the experience of proven leaders (Carr, 2008; Coatney, 2010; Lankford, 2006). Others function more as handbooks for practicing school librarians, describing specific actions they can take in their roles as leaders (Anderson, 1985; Farmer, 1995; Harvey, 2008; Wilson & Lyders,

2001). Still others serve as textbooks in courses aimed at pre-service school librarians (Donham, 2008). Popular practitioner magazines are also replete with articles on the subject (Everhart, 2007; Haycock, 2010; Sindelar, 2009; Williams, 2006). These works, while containing what may be very useful advice, make little reference to empirical studies which support their suggestions. The proliferation of such literature suggests that there is a high demand for knowledge about school library leadership. The academy, however, has not focused very much on this area of practitioners' needs in the specific setting of the school library.

School library leadership in practice. McCracken (2001) focused on practicing school librarians' perceptions of their roles as identified in the *Information Power* documents (AASL, 1988; AASL, 1998). A survey consisting of 46 statements drawn from the documents required participants to indicate on a Likert-type scale of five levels to what extent they considered each statement to be an important role in their profession, as well as to what extent they were actually able to practice the role. Using open-ended questions, the survey also asked school librarians which factors promoted their ability to expand their roles to include these statements and what barriers prevented them from expanding their roles. Out of 1,000 randomly selected school librarians, 505 returned usable surveys. Results indicated that all participants considered the roles to be important but that they were rarely able to implement them fully in practice. Because this study was conducted before the release of *Empowering Learners* (AASL, 2009a), it did not include the leadership role. It did, however, address the role of program administrator, which overlaps in some ways with the role of leader. School librarians

indicated that program administrator was the second most important role in both theory and practice.

Underwood (2003) examined the practices of school librarians in a public school system in Louisiana. To gather her evidence she used observation and field notes, interviews, and analysis of school documents. She found that it was possible for an effective school librarian to function as the hub of a school, providing leadership in the areas of technology, collaborative planning, reading support, and public relations. She also found that to be effective, school librarians required support from colleagues and administrators, on both the school and system level.

Long (2007) researched school librarians' transformational leadership practice as measured by Bass and Avolio's (1995) *Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire*, searching for a correlation between leadership-style preference and librarians' performance related to the AASL guidelines (1998). She surveyed randomly selected school librarians, using Bass's (1985) theory of transformational leadership as her theoretical framework. She found that librarians who preferred transformational leadership performed the roles as prescribed by the guidelines at a high level.

Leadership development through school librarian education. Recognizing that leadership is an important component of school librarianship, both researchers and developers of school librarian education programs have undertaken studies on leadership development and the perceptions of preservice school librarians. Vansickle (2000) recruited library media faculty members at five southeastern United States universities to administer a 12-question survey to 150 preservice school librarians, 93 of whom completed the survey. The author examined participants' perceptions of the leadership

responsibilities associated with the school library profession, of the relative importance of three major task areas (instruction and collaboration, media center management, and professional involvement), and of the relative amount of time they expected to spend on each of these areas. The results indicated that the participants valued and expected to spend a substantial amount of their time on collaboration with teachers, but saw their role as one of support rather than leadership.

The Florida State University College of Information faculty developed a school library media leadership curriculum (Everhart & Dresang, 2007). The faculty drew on existing data sources such as empirical research, statistics provided by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), and discussions on electronic discussion groups. They then administered a Web-based survey to approximately 100 National Board Certified school librarians requesting information about what was most helpful to them as they went through the certification process as well as what was missing from their support mechanisms throughout the process. On the authors' behalf, one National Board Certified school librarian interviewed five unsuccessful NBPTS candidates to determine what supports would have been most helpful to them in the assessment process.

Results revealed that school librarians faced a variety of challenges as they prepared for the NBPTS assessment. Participants found great value in the support of learning communities consisting of other certification candidates and mentors. Participants also suggested that assistance with writing analytically and reflectively about their teaching practice would be helpful and indicated that time management was a significant factor in successfully completing the certification process.

Smith's dissertation (2009) is the only research conducted on school library leadership since the release of the new *Empowering Learners* guidelines (AASL, 2009a). She surveyed 30 pre-service school library media specialists who were enrolled in a master's degree program in library and information studies which strongly focused on leadership development. She used pre-existing data about their experience in the program, the *Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI)* (Kouzes & Posner, 2003) and a survey she designed herself. She found that the participants' leadership training had facilitated their self-perceived transformational leadership behaviors, resulting in scores higher than the national norms in the areas of Modeling the Way and Enabling Others to Act. Smith suggests that:

A useful study would be to examine the perceptions of school library media specialists based on the recent set of guidelines *Empowering Learners: Guidelines for School Library Media Programs* (American Association of School Librarians, 2009). Do school library media specialists with high self-perceived transformational leadership skills feel they are able to implement the new AASL standards? (p. 95)

The current study is designed to address this question, examining whether such individuals feel they are able to fulfill the leadership role as described in the new standards.

Conclusion

While leadership has been the subject of empirical research for more than a century, leadership within the library setting, and especially the school library setting, has not been the focus of very much research. Kouzes and Posner (2007) provide a useful model of transformational leadership, which can be used to examine organizations in the midst of change, such as schools, libraries, and school libraries. Because the *Empowering Learners* (AASL, 2009a) guidelines are so new, there has been

no research on the extent to which practicing school librarians are able to implement them. The current study addresses the question of whether school library leaders are able to enact the leader role as described in *Empowering Learners*.

Method

This section of the paper describes the method which was used in the proposed research. It first identifies and describes the survey questionnaire method, including a discussion of why this method is particularly appropriate for this research. It then explains the sampling method and the rationale behind it. It describes the data collection procedures for the study, including the three elements of the survey questionnaire, and explores relevant validity and reliability issues. Finally, it identifies the statistical tests used to perform data analysis for the study.

Survey Questionnaire

A survey questionnaire was the primary method of data collection for this research. “A survey...is a set of items, formulated as statements or questions, used to generate a response to each stated item” (Wildemuth, 2009, p. 257). Surveys use rating scales and open-ended questions to collect facts and measure beliefs, opinions, and attitudes; they are typically self-report instruments. They can be used to assess cognitive, affective, and physical functioning (Colton & Covert, 2007).

A survey is appropriate for this research for many reasons. It enables the researcher to obtain information from a large number of people. It allows the researcher to explore relationships between variables, such as the relationship between a school librarian’s years of experience and her transformational leadership practices. It measures attitudes and beliefs, facilitating research into the school librarians’

perceptions of their own leadership practices (Babbie, 1990; Dillman, 2007; Wildemuth, 2009). Finally, it is easy to preserve anonymity and confidentiality with surveys (Colton & Covert, 2007). This is especially important when school librarians might fear that if their answers to questions about their leadership practices were revealed to administrators, it might influence their performance evaluations.

Sample

The population of interest is school library leaders. As it would be a challenge to identify all school library leaders in North Carolina, creating a sampling frame for this population is difficult. Because of this, this research study used purposive sampling (Patten, 2005; Wildemuth, 2009). In order to find a group of school librarians likely also to be leaders, the researcher turned to the directory of National Board Certified Teachers (NBPTS, 2010a). These school librarians have completed a portfolio assessment which includes an assessment standard related to leadership. The directory provides the name and school district of employment of all National Board Certified teachers and school librarians. There are 2,584 school librarians listed nationwide; the current study focused on those who live and work in North Carolina. This keeps the sample manageable and also related to the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards Commission's new focus on leadership.

The NBCT directory was used to obtain the names and school districts of 609 National Board Certified school librarians in North Carolina. The researcher then used Google, school district websites and directories, and the directory for the American Association of School Librarians 2009 National Conference to find publicly available email addresses for these school librarians. The researcher was able to find email

addresses for 459 of these individuals; 39 of these email addresses were later found to be invalid, providing a final sample of 420 school librarians who were invited to participate in the survey. Of these, 154 completed the survey.

Data Collection

The survey consisted of two instruments, both using interval-type items (Colton & Covert, 2007) assessed on a 10-point Likert-type scale, as well as a section consisting of descriptive information about the participants.

Leadership practices inventory. The Leadership Practices Inventory (Kouzes & Posner, 2003) is a validated and reliable 30-item scalar survey designed to measure transformational leadership (Abu-Tineh, Khasawneh & A-Omari, 2008; Brown & Posner, 2001; Fields & Herold, 1997; Harris, 1996; Hautala, 2005; Ridgway, 2001). It measures leadership along five dimensions based on Kouzes & Posner's five practices of exemplary leadership: challenging an organization's processes, inspiring shared vision, enabling others to act, modeling the way, and encouraging the heart (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). Posner and Kouzes (1988) interviewed 1,200 managers about their best leadership practices to develop the LPI. They consider the inventory a "developmental, diagnostic instrument, useful for assessing individuals' leadership actions and behaviors (practices) and subsequently enhancing their leadership capabilities" (Posner & Kouzes, 1994, p. 964).

The LPI measures transformational leadership behaviors on a 10-point Likert-type scale. Participants choose their level of participation in transformational leadership practices in five categories. These categories are Challenging the Process, Inspiring a Shared Vision, Enabling Others to Act, Modeling the Way, and Encouraging the Heart.

- Challenging the Process involves leader's risk-taking behaviors.
- Modeling the Way describes the way leaders display their preferred methods of interacting with individuals within their organizations.
- Encouraging the Heart statements evaluate the ways in which a leader celebrates accomplishments of an organization and its members' contributions.
- Inspiring a Shared Vision refers to the leader's ability to guide organization members as they pursue a unified vision for the organization's future.
- Enabling Others to Act involves the leader promoting collaboration and making others feel empowered.

Each statement measures an individual leadership practice. The scores for the statements within each category are totaled to provide five subscores which can be used to identify in which dimensions a particular leader's strengths and weaknesses lie. Finally, the five subscores can be totaled to provide an overall score for transformational leadership.

The LPI has been previously employed in education research (Leech & Fulton, 2008; Posner & Kouzes, 1993; Viegas, Brun, & Hausafus, 1998). For example, Joseph (2009) evaluated a principal preparation program using the LPI. Koh (2008) used it to compare the management skills and leadership skills of pre-service teachers and Laflin (2009) studied the self-perceptions of students participating in a graduate teacher program regarding their practice of effective leadership behaviors. This is only be the second time the LPI has been used with school librarians; the first was Smith's dissertation research in 2009.

Empowering learners. The second instrument consists of statements taken directly from the text of *Empowering Learners* (AASL, 2009a). Each of these statements describes one of the characteristics of a school library media coordinator acting as leader. Participants indicated how frequently they practice each of these behaviors on a 10-point Likert-type scale. The 10-point scale is intended to be consistent with the LPI so as to avoid participant confusion. In addition to providing information about specific leadership practices, the scores for these statements were totaled to provide an overall measure of the extent to which the school library media coordinator is able to carry out the leadership practices identified in *Empowering Learners* (AASL, 2009a).

Descriptive information. The final segment of the survey collected descriptive information about the participants. This consisted of items related to professional expertise, as well as items describing the participant's working environment. Most of these items were nominal or ordinal in type. A final question asked participants to indicate if they would be willing to participate in interviews for a follow-up study and, if so, required them to provide an email address where they might be reached.

Validity and Reliability

Leadership practices inventory. According to Abu-Tineh, Khasawneh, and Al-Omari (2008), "Results from the LPI have shown high face validity and predictive validity, meaning that the results not only make sense to people but also predict whether a leader's performance is high, moderate, or low" (p.653). The internal reliability coefficients for the LPI range between .75 and .90 (Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Posner &

Kouzes, 1988, 1993) and the test-retest reliability averages .94 (Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Posner & Kouzes, 1988, 1993).

Empowering learners. Because the items in the *Empowering Learners* (AASL, 2009a) instrument are drawn directly from that document, and because the study's intent is to measure to what extent school librarians are able to implement these guidelines, face validity is inherent to the instrument.

Data Analysis

Each respondent's survey data was entered into the statistical analysis software package, SPSS. Because the scale answer-type can be considered as interval data, parametric tests of difference and association were used. School librarians' scores on the LPI (Kouzes & Posner, 2003) were averaged to provide a mean sample score for each subscale (Modeling the Way, Inspiring a Shared Vision, Challenging the Process, Enabling Others to Act, and Encouraging the Heart). These scores were compared with the national norms available on the Leadership Challenge website. A one-sample t-test, which is used to determine if there is a significant difference between two independent samples (Vaughan, 2001), was selected to determine if the difference between the school librarian scores and the national norms was statistically significant. The national norms were used as the test values. Statistical significance was established with a p-value of less than 0.05, establishing 95% reliability of the results. Paired sample t-tests were used to determine if the difference between school librarian scores on each subscale was statistically significant, with $p < .05$.

Each school librarian's scores on the *Empowering Learners* (2009a) survey items were totaled to create a complete *Empowering Learners* score. The Pearson correlation

coefficient was used to determine the strength of the relationship between scores on the LPI subscales and the complete *Empowering Learners* score, again with a statistical significance level of $p < 0.05$. A complete list of variables for each research question and the statistical tests used in this study are listed in Table 1. The study population mean for each *Empowering Learners* statement was calculated to provide a point of comparison for identifying school librarians' self-perceived strengths and weaknesses.

Table 1
Statistical Tests

Research Question	Test	Variable Tested
RQ1	One Sample t-test	LPI Score
RQ1	Paired t-test	LPI Subscales
RQ2	Pearson correlation coefficient	<i>Empowering Learners</i> Score

Results

This study assessed the level of self-perceived transformational leadership skills among National Board Certified school librarians in North Carolina. In particular, their transformational leadership and their ability to carry out the leadership guidelines provided in *Empowering Learners* (AASL, 2009a) were studied. Data was collected using the *Leadership Practices Inventory* (LPI) and a 22-question supplemental survey based on the *Empowering Learners* guidelines. The data was subsequently analyzed to answer the research questions that were formulated to address a void in the research literature. This void needs to be filled if school librarians are to assume the leadership roles recommended by professional guidelines, advanced certification standards, and professional teaching standards.

The research questions were:

1. What are the self-perceived transformational leadership practices of school librarian leaders?
2. To what extent are librarians with high self-perceived transformational leadership able to carry out the leadership behaviors described in Empowering Learners (AASL, 2009a)?

The remainder of this section describes the population and then addresses each research question and the related results in detail.

The Population

Of the 424 participants invited to complete the survey, 154 did so. This represents a 36% response rate for National Board Certified school librarians invited to participate and a 25% response rate for National Board Certified school librarians listed in the directory for North Carolina. Most participants had less than 10 years of experience teaching aside from their experience as school librarians (Table 2). Years of experience as a school librarian varied widely, ranging from 4 to more than 31 years² (Table 3). Almost all participants were working as school librarians when the survey was administered (Table 4); three were district-level school media supervisors, one was a school administrator, one was a consultant for the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, and one was a Director of Library, Instructional Technologies and Communications. None were currently retired. Participants served rural, urban, and suburban communities (Table 5) and all grade levels, with some school librarians serving a combination of elementary, middle, and high school levels (Table 6).

² Because a teacher must have three years of experience in his or her discipline to apply for National Board Certification, and the process takes most of a full school year, no participants reported less than four years of experience as a school librarian.

Participants reported using a variety of types of scheduling, with 60% using flexible scheduling, 25% using a combination of fixed and flexible scheduling, and only 15% using exclusively fixed scheduling (Table 7). School librarians served a wide range of student populations, but none served fewer than a hundred students and only 4% served more than 2000 (Table 8).

Table 2

Years of Teaching Experience Not as a School Librarian

# of Years	# of Participants Reporting	% of Participants Reporting
0 – 3	70	45%
4 – 9	40	26%
10 – 14	14	9%
15 – 20	16	10%
21 – 30	11	7%
31+	3	2%
Total	154	100%

Table 3

Years of Teaching Experience as a School Librarian

# of Years	# of Participants Reporting	% of Participants Reporting
0 – 3	0	0%
4 – 9	38	25%
10 – 14	50	32%
15 – 20	31	20%
21 – 30	31	20%
31+	4	3%
Total	154	100%

Table 4

Current Professional Role

Role	# of Participants Reporting	% of Participants Reporting
School Library Media Coordinator	147	95%
District Level School Library Media Supervisor	3	2%
School Administrator	1	1%
DPI Consultant	1	1%
Retiree	0	0%
Other	2	1%
Total	154	100%

“Other” answers included Library, Instructional Technologies and Communications Director and Faculty and School Media Specialist.

Table 5

Type of Community Served

Type of Community	# of Participants Reporting	% of Participants Reporting
Rural	74	48%
Urban	31	20%
Suburban	49	32%
Total	154	100%

Table 6

Grade Levels Served

Grade Levels Served	# of Participants Reporting	% of Participants Reporting
K – 5	70	46%
6 – 8	51	33%
9 – 12	55	36%

Table 7
Type of Scheduling Used

Type of Scheduling	# of Participants Reporting	% of Participants Reporting
Fixed	23	15%
Flexible	92	60%
Combination	39	25%
Total	154	100%

Table 8
Number of Students Served

# of Students Served	# of Participants Reporting	% of Participants Reporting
1 – 100	0	0%
101 – 500	44	29%
501 – 1000	70	45%
1001 – 2000	34	22%
2001 – 3000	3	2%
3000+	3	2%
Total	154	100%

The Leadership Practices of School Librarians

The one-sample t-test was used to determine if there were significant differences between the means of the self-perceived leadership practices of the study population and the national sample means reported by Kouzes and Posner (2003). The alpha level of $p < .05$ was used and the national sample's means were used as test values. On each of Kouzes and Posner's (2003) five subscales, participants scored higher than the national norm. On every scale, school librarians perceived themselves to have a high level of transformational leadership (Table 9). The largest mean difference was on the Modeling the Way subscale, but school librarians scored themselves highest on Enabling Others to Act. The smallest mean difference was on Inspiring a Shared Vision, which was also where school librarians scored themselves lowest.

Table 9

North Carolina NBCT School Librarians' LPI Subscales Compared to National Norms

Subscale	Test Value	Study Population Means	Percentile Ranking	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig. (2-tailed)
Modeling the Way	47.016	51.90	70 th	10.294	153	.000*
Inspiring a Shared Vision	44.3442	46.73	50 th	3.115	153	.002*
Challenging the Process	46.1146	48.83	60 th	4.443	153	.000*
Enabling Others to Act	49.3973	52.89	60 th	9.200	153	.000*
Encouraging the Heart	47.0553	50.40	60 th	5.265	153	.000*

Note: *significant at $p < .05$

School Librarians' Ability to Carry Out the *Empowering Learners* (2009a)

Guidelines

Each school librarian's scores on the *Empowering Learners* survey items were totaled to provide an overall *Empowering Learners* score. The Pearson correlation coefficient was used to determine if there was a relationship between this score and each of the subscales. The alpha level of $p < .05$ was used. There was a positive correlation between each of the subscales and the total *Empowering Learners* score (Table 10). The strongest correlation was between high *EL* scores and high scores on the Challenging the Process and Inspiring a Shared Vision subscales. The weakest correlation was between high *EL* scores and high scores on the Modeling the Way subscale.

The study population mean for each individual *Empowering Learners* item was calculated to enable comparison of self-perceived strengths and weaknesses (Table 11). School librarians identified their strengths as leading within the school community, supporting the curriculum, and creating an environment conducive to learning and collaboration. They scored themselves lowest on tasks related to advocacy and scholarly publication.

Table 10

Correlation Between Empowering Learners Score and LPI Subscales

		Modeling the Way	Inspiring a Shared Vision	Challenging the Process	Enabling Others to Act	Encouraging the Heart
<i>Empowering Learners</i>	Pearson Correlation	.606*	.680*	.713*	.619*	.619*
	Sig. (2- tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	154	154	154	154	154

Note: *significant at $p < .05$

Table 11

School Librarians' Ability to Implement Empowering Learners (2009a) Guidelines

The school library media specialist:	Mean
is a visible and active leader within the school community	8.99
is an early adopter of changes in current educational and technological trends	8.79
serves on the decision-making team of the school	8.60
benchmarks program to school, state, and national educational program standards	School: 8.63 State: 8.65 National: 8.19
participates in local, regional, state, and national professional associations for education and librarianship	Local: 8.68 Regional: 7.63 State: 8.01 National: 6.16
shares knowledge about libraries and learning by publishing articles in the school newsletter or other community news sources	6.25
shares expertise by presenting information at faculty meetings, parent meetings, and school board meetings	Faculty: 7.87 Parent: 6.05 School board: 3.06
shares best practices and research by publishing articles in state and national professional journals	State: 1.79 National: 1.67
uses research to inform practice and makes evidence-based decisions	7.21
takes responsibility for professional growth through continuous program improvement	9.12
fosters an atmosphere of respect and rapport between the SLMS and all members of the learning community to encourage student learning and to promote teacher enthusiasm and participation	9.48
creates an environment that is conducive to active and participatory learning, resource-based learning, and collaboration with teaching staff	Active and participatory: 9.56 Resource-based: 9.47 Collaboration: 9.38

Summary

School librarians perceived themselves as having a high level of transformational leadership on each of the *Leadership Practices Inventory* subscales. They considered themselves best at Enabling Others to Act, while they were most different from the national norm in Modeling the Way. They considered themselves least experienced in Inspiring a Shared Vision, which was reflected by the difference between their score and the national norm. Their high level of transformational leadership was positively correlated with their ability to carry out the leadership guidelines identified in *Empowering Learners* (AASL, 2009a). Challenging the Process and Inspiring a Shared Vision were highly correlated with success at implementing the *Empowering Learners* guidelines. School librarians perceived themselves as very good at creating an environment conducive to learning and collaboration, as well as aligning their programs to national and state standards. They identified practices related to advocacy and outreach as some of their weakest areas. They almost never identified themselves as individuals who published articles in scholarly publications.

Conclusions

This section of the paper is designed to formulate conclusions based on the data analysis. It consists of a summary of the study, its limitations, conclusions, and the implication of these conclusions.

Summary of Study

This study was conducted to describe the leadership practices of National Board Certified school librarians in North Carolina and to determine to what extent they are able to carry out the leadership practices identified in *Empowering Learners: Guidelines*

for School Library Media Programs (AASL, 2009a). The *Leadership Practices Inventory* (LPI) and a supplementary survey consisting of twenty two items based on the text of *Empowering Learners* comprised the data collection instrument. The questions on the *Leadership Practices Inventory* assess leadership as demonstrated through five transformational leadership behaviors. These behaviors are Modeling the Way, Challenging the Process, Inspiring a Shared Vision, Encouraging the Heart, and Enabling Others to Act.

Of the 609 National Board Certified school librarians listed in the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards directory, 154 participated in the study. The t-test was used to compare the study population's mean on each of the LPI subscales with the national population survey conducted by Kouzes and Posner (2003). The Pearson correlation coefficient was used to identify correlations between each subscale and the *Empowering Learners* assessment.

Limitations of Study

This study used purposive sampling to identify individuals who were likely to have high levels of transformational leadership. Because of this, its results are not generalizable to school librarians as a population. The response rate of only 36% might bias the results; individuals who have a high level of transformational leadership might be more likely to respond to the survey invitation than others. The sample was also limited to participants in the state of North Carolina, who may have different experiences and leadership practices than school librarians in other geographic regions. Although the results of the study are not generalizable to the wider population of school

librarians worldwide, they provide an important contribution to the currently greatly limited study of leadership in the school library environment.

The validity of the study relied on the participants' honesty in their responses to both instruments. It was assumed that they thoughtfully selected their responses to each item. The only perceptions reported are their own; the study does not include data about how administrators, colleagues, or students perceive their leadership practices.

Conclusions

Differences between school librarians' LPI scores and the national means.

The first significant finding of this study is that school librarians scored themselves higher than the national means on all five LPI subscales, but that the differences between means varied widely. This supports the proposition that National Board Certification requires applicants to demonstrate strong leadership practices. In particular, school librarians differed most from the national mean in the area of Modeling the Way. Modeling the Way consists of practices such as clearly identifying personal values and ideals and setting an example by demonstrating a commitment to these beliefs through daily action (Kouzes & Posner, 2007).

School librarians differed least from the national mean in the areas of Challenging the Process and Inspiring a Shared Vision. Challenging the Process involves searching "for opportunities to innovate, grow, and improve" as well as "experimenting and taking risks" (Kouzes & Posner, 2007, p. 32). Leaders who challenge the process try new things, fail at them, and learn from their failures. Inspiring a Shared Vision takes place when leaders "envision exciting and ennobling

possibilities” and enlist others who share that vision (Kouzes & Posner, 2007, 31). They have great enthusiasm for their work and spread that enthusiasm to others.

Variance among LPI subscales. School librarians, while they perceived themselves as having a higher level of transformational leadership than the national norm on each subscale, perceived themselves as having a different level of transformational leadership on each subscale. They scored themselves highest on Enabling Others to Act. Enabling Others to Act consists of practices such as fostering collaboration, building trust, and strengthening the performance capacity of others within the organization (Kouzes & Posner, 2007, p. 34). These activities are consistent with the information specialist and instructional consultant/partner roles described in both versions of *Information Power* (AASL, 1988; AASL, 1998). The school librarians scored themselves second highest on Modeling the Way. These two areas were also identified as strengths by participants in Smith’s study of pre-service school librarians (2009).

Correlation between the *Leadership Practices Inventory* and *Empowering Learners*. There was a positive correlation between each of the LPI subscales and the *Empowering Learners* assessment total scores, but this correlation was strongest with Challenging the Process and Inspiring a Shared Vision. The fact that the *Empowering Learners* practices are correlated most strongly with the areas in which school librarians felt the least confident suggests that school librarians could better implement the guidelines with support in these two areas.

Specific practices identified in *Empowering Learners*. School librarians considered themselves to be strong leaders at the school level. They perceived

themselves as consistently aligning their programs to state and national standards and providing an environment conducive to learning and collaboration. Their professional engagement was stronger at the local and state level than at the national level. They only based their decision-making and practice on research and evidence sometimes. They did not frequently advocate for their programs in the larger community or share information about their programs through school publications or at faculty and parent meetings. Sharing at school board meetings was especially infrequent. School librarians scored themselves dramatically lower on publication than on any other professional practice; the average participant rarely published in professional journals.

Summary. School librarians frequently engaged in leadership practices that required them to serve in a supportive capacity. They did not engage as much in practices focused on risk-taking or outreach. The next section of the paper makes recommendations for increasing their comfort with these types of activities.

Suggestions and Recommendations

The conclusions drawn from this study have yielded recommendations regarding education of pre-service school librarians and professional development for practicing school librarians. They also suggest ways in which the American Association of School Librarians can support its members as they implement the *Empowering Learners* (AASL, 2009a) leadership guidelines. Finally, they provide a foundation for further research on leadership in the school library environment.

Education and Professional Development

Pre-service school librarians and practicing school librarians can benefit from leadership training, particularly in the areas of Inspiring a Shared Vision and

Challenging the Process. Kouzes and Posner (2007) suggest that in order to inspire a shared vision, leaders must be able to “envision the future” and “develop an ideal and unique image of the future for the common good” (p. 95). To support development of these skills, school librarians might receive training in goal-setting processes.

Furthermore, leaders must be able to enlist others to support this vision. Professional development targeting this skill might focus on networking with colleagues and administrators, as well as interacting with the wider community to gain support for the vision of the school library media program. Professional development which supports Inspiring a Shared Vision would address the advocacy aspects of the *Empowering Learners* (AASL, 2009a) guidelines.

Challenging the Process involves searching for opportunities and taking risks. Many school librarians may search for opportunities for growth through familiar channels such as conferences and trade publications, but they could also benefit from developing “outsight” (Kouzes & Posner, 2007) and looking for opportunities in the wider field of education. Information about business practices and emerging trends in business and academia might also help school librarians discover new ways to improve their practice. Kouzes and Posner (2007) focus on questioning the status quo, which can be difficult in the educational environment. School librarian education programs are particularly suited to teaching pre-service school librarians to question the status quo so that when they enter the field, they are not tempted to continue processes which are in place for the sole reason that “That’s how it’s always been done.”

Risk-taking, as Kouzes and Posner (2007) point out, need not involve completely overhauling a system. Kouzes and Posner emphasize the value of generating “small

wins” by breaking large changes down into small, actionable steps which will lead to cumulative successes. Again, goal-setting techniques will benefit school librarians as they learn to take the changes necessary to bring about the vision of their program and turn them into small actionable steps. By trying small changes and learning from their success or failure, school librarians can take meaningful risks without jeopardizing the larger success of their programs.

Kouzes and Posner (2007) also recommend that leaders view change as a challenge, rather than a setback. School librarians might benefit from professional development designed expressly to instruct them in how to approach the change constantly present in schools. Developing an internal locus of control, so that librarians will respond to changes by determining their own course of action, might be a valuable focus of some of this professional development.

Finally, school librarians might be more engaged with the scholarly publication process if this were highlighted in education and professional development. Resources could be developed which would provide annotated guides to relevant journals and information about their submission policies. There might be a strong audience presence at a conference presentation about how to publish action research reports. Any initiatives in this area must take into account the possibility that school librarians might see publication as an activity which is not particularly valued by administrators or productive in their daily work. Instructors and presenters will need to highlight the direct benefits to school librarians from participating in the scholarly publication process.

Support for Professional Guidelines

The American Association of School Librarians (AASL) published *Empowering Learners: Guidelines for School Library Media Programs* (2009a), but this document does not provide much guidance on how to implement the guidelines, particularly in the area of leadership. AASL has strongly supported its standards documents relating to student proficiencies, publishing not only the *Standards for the 21st Century Learner* (2007) but supporting it with the guide *Standards for the 21st-Century Learner in Action* (AASL, 2009b) which provide specific skills benchmarks and sample lesson plans. AASL has also created a national implementation plan for the standards called *Learning for Life* (AASL, 2008). Similar support is needed for school librarians to be successful in implementing the *Empowering Learners* (AASL, 2009a) guidelines. While it is not yet widely available, AASL has collaborated with Britannica Digital Learning to co-publish an online, interactive planning guide which will allow school librarians to assess their own programs (AASL, 2011). This interactive module requires an annual subscription. School librarians who might have trouble fitting the subscription into their budget might benefit from a published document which, while not including the interactive features, describes the sequential planning steps and provides the program assessment rubric. They could purchase this document once and refer to it as often as necessary without incurring additional fees. AASL has provided free webinar training for members to learn how to use the interactive guide. It is imperative that AASL continue to provide these kinds of resources to support school librarians as they develop their leadership practices.

Suggestions for Further Research

This study explored the relationship between the transformational leadership practices of National Board Certified school librarians and their ability to implement the *Empowering Learners* (AASL, 2009a) leadership guidelines. The purpose of this research was to investigate the current leadership role of school librarians and to advance research about this role and how it relates to the implementation of professional guidelines. This study makes a significant addition to the research by demonstrating that transformational leadership practices are positively correlated with the ability to implement professional guidelines, and by identifying practices which are particularly useful in implementing those guidelines.

The results of this study have yielded the following recommendations for future research. In her study of Florida State University's Project LEAD program participants, Smith (2009) found that targeted leadership education was correlated with increased transformational leadership among pre-service school librarians. The current study demonstrates that there is a correlation between transformational leadership and the ability to implement the *Empowering Learners* (AASL, 2009a) guidelines. Future research might examine the effects of leadership education and interventions on school librarians' ability to implement these guidelines. After an intervention, would they perceive themselves as better able to implement the guidelines than they had before the intervention?

Further research could be done in the areas of advocacy and publication among school librarians and the institutional cultures in which they are situated. This research could examine administrative support for activities such as presenting at faculty, parent,

and school board meetings and publishing both in school and local publications and scholarly journals.

The current study is limited by the fact that it relies on school librarians' perceptions of their own practice. There is an Observer component to the *Leadership Practices Inventory* which could be used with administrators, colleagues, students, and other stakeholders. The results could be compared to the self-reports from school librarians. Observers might also identify which of the practices described in *Empowering Learners* (AASL, 2009a) they see in evidence in their school library media program.

The *Leadership Practices Inventory* is not the only instrument which measures transformational leadership. Other instruments could be used with school librarians to determine if their level of leadership is different when measured with a different instrument. These other instruments might test aspects of leadership or reveal characteristics which were not explored by the LPI.

The *Leadership Practices Inventory* uses language that is not specific to any particular context to describe leadership practices. A follow-up study should be conducted to determine how these practices manifest specifically within the school library context. School librarians with high self-perceived transformational leadership could be interviewed about their own practices. These practices might inform the implementation of *Empowering Learners* (AASL, 2009a) which itself uses non-specific language to describe a set of leadership practices. Other characteristics of successful school library leaders might also become apparent in these interviews. The results of

this research could be used to bridge the gap between research and practice, informing school librarian education programs and professional development practices.

Summary

In conclusion, the sample for this study was purposely chosen and thus did not provide generalizable results, but its findings were significant. The leadership practices of National Board Certified school librarians in North Carolina focus on providing support and setting an example for others. The study identified inspiring a vision, risk-taking, and advocacy as areas where school librarians can improve, and demonstrated that there is a relationship between these practices and successful implementation of the *Empowering Learners* (AASL, 2009a) guidelines. These findings can guide future research in school library leadership and provide direction for the education and professional development of school librarians as they take on their new leadership role.

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